Competency-Based Transfer Pilot Project

Higher Education Coordinating Board

December 15, 2005

Overview

- Legislative mandate

- Definition of 'competency-based transfer'
  - What is it?
  - How does it differ from the current system?

- Results of the pilot project

- Recommendations

Legislative Mandate

- In 2003, House Bill 1909 stated that the HECB should "recruit and select institutions of higher education to participate in a pilot project to…"

- Define the knowledge, skills, and abilities students should possess in order to enter an upper division program in a particular academic discipline

- Certify that a student meets the expected standards

- Report to the legislature in December 2005

What is Competency-based Transfer?

- Current system is based on 'seat-time'
  - Accumulation of credits through the successful completion of specified classes

- Transfer on the basis of competency requires:
  - <u>Institutions</u> to identify the skills and abilities students must possess to enter upper division coursework
  - <u>Institutions</u> to identify the appropriate assessments to certify students are ready
  - <u>Students</u> to demonstrate that they have attained the necessary knowledge and skills

Pilot Project Results

- Eastern Washington University, Spokane Falls CC and Spokane CC agreed to participate

- Criminal justice, computer information systems, and elementary education disciplines were selected

  – Faculty work groups from two-year and four-year schools in each discipline approached the work differently

Results: Criminal Justice

- Criminal justice faculty identified skills and knowledge gained by students in Statistics and Research Methods courses

- Faculty developed assessments of these skills and tested students at EWU and Spokane CC

Criminal Justice Pilot Results

School	Course	Number of Students Tested	Total Points Possible on Test	Average Points Scored
EWU	Statistics	92	18	9
SFCC	Statistics	10	18	6
EWU	Research Methods	38	30	24
SFCC	Research Methods	10	30	9

Results: Computer Science

- Computer science faculty at EWU rewrote course descriptions based on national standards

  – Shared new course descriptions with Spokane and Spokane Falls CCs

  – EWU has already developed placement test for incoming juniors. All the participants recommend adding an assessment at the community college

Results: Elementary Education

- Faculty developed shared competencies for the Introduction to Education class taught at all three institutions

- Faculty made preliminary recommendations on assessments to certify that all three institutions are teaching similar materials

Recommendations

- Delay expanding the pilot to other institutions and disciplines, because:

  – Transfer in Washington is already quite efficient

  – Data does not exist to demonstrate that competency-based transfer actually makes the system more efficient or effective

  – Expansion would require a significant investment by the state, but it is unclear whether the investment will pay off

Recommendations

- If the state expands the pilot, policy makers should:
  - Provide funds to support planning at the state level and to expand communication between two-year and four-year colleges

- And the colleges and universities should:
  - Define the skills and knowledge associated with the general education requirements that underlie most 4-year degrees
  - Designate work groups to design and update competencies and student assessments in specific fields
  - Communicate expectations to transfer students early in their studies